

EU Announces 5-year plan; US agencies still "lack crucial details"

WASHINGTON – Congresswoman Louise Slaughter (NY-28) Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee and the only microbiologist in Congress, today reiterated her call for bold federal action to limit the overuse of antibiotics in farm animals after the European Union (EU) announced a five-year strategy to combat antibiotic resistance.

The EU announcement, which was made on European Antibiotic Awareness Day in the EU and ["Get Smart About Antibiotics Week,"](#) in the US, comes on the heels of data collected showing growing resistance to antibiotics across Europe.

"It's a shame that after all these years the US is still caught flat-footed," said Slaughter. "We've known that this is a problem for quite some time. And we're totally unprepared to deal with the growing threat of antibiotic resistance, as was confirmed by the GAO, by not even collecting the necessary data. The American public should be outraged."

The GAO study, released in September by Slaughter's office, is titled, ["Agencies Have Made Limited Progress Addressing Antibiotic Use in Animals,"](#) and was commissioned at Slaughter's request in 2009. The GAO found that the federal agencies responsible for addressing the overuse of antibiotics in food animal production "lack crucial details" in data to do their job.

As part of its 5-year strategy, the European Commission calls for the judicious use of medically important antibiotics in agricultural by phasing out the prophylactic (preventive) use of these drugs.

"By all means, if an animal is sick, it should be treated with antibiotics," said Slaughter. "But to fatten up healthy animals through the daily dosing of antibiotics – drugs that should be preserved to treat human illnesses – is malpractice and it's contributing to an increase in deadly antibiotic resistant bacteria. And as other nations move towards more antibiotic-free meat, we really can't expect that they will continue to purchase US meat grown with antibiotics."

Slaughter is a long-time leader in food safety. She is the author of the Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act (PAMTA), legislation that would ensure that we preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics for the treatment of human disease.

[For more on PAMTA and her work to protect public health, click here.](#)

[For more on the European Commission study, click here.](#)